

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

USU Business Alum and Monaco Coach CEO Recognized with Top Honor

The Jon M. Huntsman School of Business Distinguished Executive Alumnus award winner in 2007 has had an impact on the life of Dolly Parton.

That bit of notoriety, however, is not what prompted school officials to give Kay Toolson the Huntsman School's highest honor.

Toolson is the chairman and CEO of the Monaco Coach Corporation, a company based in Coburg, Oregon, that makes recreational vehicles. Celebrities such as Dolly Parton and actor Jackie Chan have ordered custom-made vehicles from Toolson's company.



The inside of an RV made by Monaco Coach Corporation. USU alum Kay Toolson is the chairman and CEO of the company. Celebrities such as Dolly Parton and actor Jackie Chan have ordered custom-made vehicles from Toolson's company.

When Toolson, '70, business administration, was honored at the 2007 Annual Fall Awards Banquet, the focus, however, was not so much on numbers but instead on his management style. Toolson's management philosophy has

When Toolson and a partner purchased the company in 1987, it was bankrupt. At the time it was a small, specialty recreation vehicle manufacturer, recording \$17 million in annual revenues. Now it is a thriving 5,400-employee company that makes a broad spectrum of recreational vehicles. It generates annual revenues in excess of \$1.3 billion. Toolson bought out his partner in 1993 and is now the company's largest individual shareholder.

made his business successful and his employees loyal. Dean Douglas D. Anderson told of the impact Toolson has had on the lives of his employees and how he listens to them.

"Kay listens to his employees because, he said, 'they have valuable insight to offer,'" Dean Anderson said. "The company practices something it calls 'Peak Performance,' a



Kay Toolson was awarded the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business Distinguished Executive Alumnus Award in 2007.

program that encourages everyone to offer suggestions for improving the way the company operates. Those suggestions are often implemented and have made a big difference in the company's performance."

In an interview before the event, Toolson shared a key element of his philosophy.

"You've got to be able to listen," Toolson said. "You've got to be able to pay attention when you are listening. You've got to make eye contact. You've got to care. You can't fake caring. You can't fake honesty. And you can't fake sincerity."

An administrative assistant who had worked for Toolson for more than 20 years told the *Huntsman Alumni Magazine* about the many people Kay Toolson and his wife, Judy, have helped.

"Kay and Judy's personal support helped one employee and his family get through the loss of two of their grandchildren and the near loss of their daughter in a car accident," she said. "Kay and Judy met this employee and his wife at the airport. Kay and Judy handed them the keys to one of their personal vehicles and let them know that whatever they needed, Kay and Judy would be there for them."

Kay Toolson came to the banquet with a number of family members and employees. He was quick to credit them for the company's success.

He offered some advice to the students in the audience and anyone else open to what he had to share.

"The most important things you need to do in life are be happy, learn, grow and listen," he said. "You never learn when you are talking. You only learn when you are listening. You can go out and succeed. You can be anything you want to be. You can do anything you want to do. Just make sure you do it well."

The banquet, held in September, offers the Huntsman School the opportunity to not only recognize the Distinguished Executive Alumnus of the year but to thank the many people who help students by funding scholarships. Students are invited to share dinner with the donors who have supported them by funding the student scholarships.

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